

SMILING SUN NGOs RECEIVE GFATM AWARDS TO FIGHT TB

DHAKA, JUNE 15 -- A Memorandum of Understand (MoU) has been signed between ten NGOs from the USAID-funded NGO Service Delivery Program and BRAC (the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee). Under the terms of the MoU, U.S. \$216,400 (Tk. 1.47 crore) will be disbursed to the NGOs from the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). In Bangladesh, the GFATM works in coordination with the Government of Bangladesh, and with BRAC which coordinates funding disbursement to recipient NGOs.

Roughly a third of the world's population is infected with tuberculosis (TB); 2 million people die from the disease every year (over 5,000 a day) --98% of all TB deaths are in the developing world. The problem is most severe in Africa, but half of all new TB cases come from just six Asian countries, including Bangladesh, which has the sixth worst rate of infection in the world --half the adult population is infected. About a quarter of the 300,000 Bangladeshis who develop TB each year will die from the disease.

The ten NSDP NGOs selected to receive GFATM funding are Nishkriti, PSTC, BAMANEH, PSF, Tilottoma, PKS (Khulna), IMAGE, CWFD, Fair Foundation and Swanirvar Bangladesh. The new GFATM funding is initially for a 14 month period for these NSDP partner NGOs, but based on satisfactory performance the grants may be extended through 2011. The funds will be used to strengthen current DOTS activity (directly observed treatment short course); to involve the private sector more closely in fighting TB; to create demand by conducting advocacy and social mobilization communication campaigns and to develop joint TB-HIV/AIDS collaborative activities.

NSDP NGOs and their network of “Smiling Sun” clinics have made great strides in improving the case detection rate for TB, particularly since 2004. The clinics are demonstrating renewed commitment by expanding community outreach efforts to help improve rates of both case detection and treatment. As a result, in Smiling Sun clinic catchment areas the TB case detection rate increased from 30% to 43% last year. And this year, the case detection rate in Dhaka alone has reached 58%. The percentage of TB cases treated successfully increased from 83.4% to 84.8% --the DOTS target is 85%.

The ten NSDP NGOs provide TB services at 55 urban clinics. 37 of these clinics provide only DOTS. The remaining 18 provide both DOTS and microscopy (diagnostic) services. Almost four and a half a million people live in the catchment areas served by these clinics, located in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna.

In the near future, community outreach efforts will be broadened in an attempt to guarantee services for high-risk groups such as garment factory workers, slum-dwellers and rickshaw-pullers, who might be unaware that they are infected, and may not know how to obtain services.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this article is also available from the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section (Tel: 8813440-4, Fax: 9881677; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>